Tips for successful community projects
Measuring your project's success

How will you know if your project was successful? What did you learn that can be applied to future projects? This review process is known as project evaluation.

Evaluation is not something that is simply done at the end of the project. You need to begin with the end in mind and create a plan for evaluation when you plan your project. This will help clarify your goals and ensure that when you get started, you collect the information needed to measure your success.

1. Define what success looks like

Start by thinking about how things will be different if your project is successful. You've selected specific activities - what changes are you hoping to see as a result?

2. Nominate your desired/expected project results

Break down the changes you want to see into:

- Short-term results.
- Medium-term results.
- Long-term results.

Remember

Long-term outcomes might not become apparent right after the project has been completed. However, you should still identify those objectives, as they will help you stay on course as the project progresses.

3. Decide how you will track progress

Decide what indicators you will use to measure your success. Depending on your project, you may want to measure changes in attitudes, knowledge or behaviour. Or, you may want to track the availability of resources (volunteers, support programs, etc.) in your community.

Be sure your indicators are relevant, well defined and measurable.

Make sure you start with baseline data, so you can compare results to measure your impact and success.

Keep it simple. For example, if you're offering workshops, you could track attendance numbers and use pre and post surveys to measure knowledge gained.

You can use '**SMART**' indicators to track your progress. Make sure your indicators are:

S	**M**	**A**	**R**	**T**
Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-bound

4. Decide how you will gather and measure the information

Possible ways to gather date include:

- Surveys – customised and publicly available.
- Interviews or focus groups.
- Observation – including photos.
- Document reviews – policies, reported incidents, etc.
- Registration forms – attendance numbers, locations, reasons for attending, etc.

Handy tip

Depending on which indicators you've selected, different methods of collecting data are more appropriate than others. Surveys, interviews and focus groups are a good way to measure perceptions, attitudes and knowledge. Observation is better for measuring changes in behaviour, infrastructure changes and project delivery timelines.

5. Build an evaluation team

Collecting data and putting it into a system where it can be analysed (e.g. a spreadsheet) takes time. Look for volunteers with different skills and divide the tasks accordingly.

6. Develop a plan

Decide who is going to do what, and how and when those tasks will be done. Remember that to demonstrate change, you may need to collect information on your indicators at two different points in time (e.g. ask participants to complete a survey before and after your activity; take before and after photos).

7. Monitor and analyse your results

Measurement and evaluation throughout your project will help improve your outcomes during the implementation phase. If it's not working as expected, be flexible and make adjustments along the way.

When reviewing the data, look for other things it may be telling you. Think laterally and continue asking for community input.

8. Share your results

Don't let your results sit on a shelf. Share with participants, funders, and others you want to engage. Show them to your community, including other groups you collaborated with or consulted.

Use your results to inform and validate. The information you gather can be used to plan your next project or funding request.

Handy tip

If your project went well, it may provide a model that can be repeated in other communities facing similar challenges.
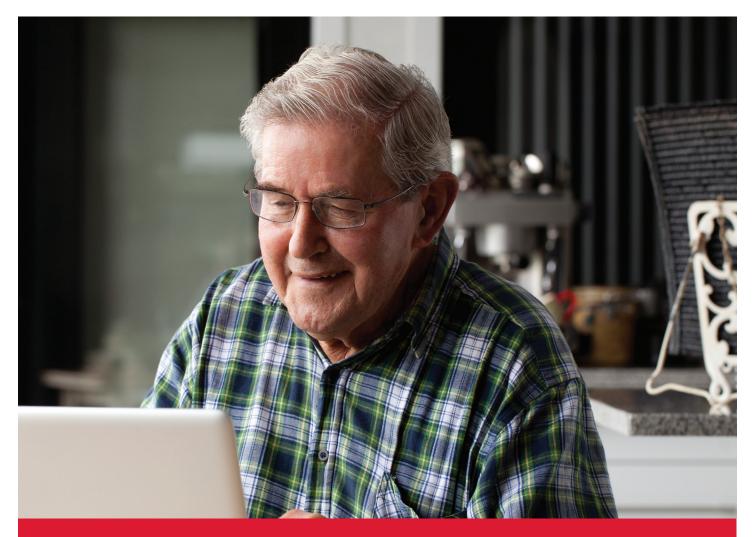
If your project didn't turn out as expected, it's even more important to share your results. Lessons learned can help inform future projects carried out by your group, your funders or other members of the community.

Glossary:

Outcome: a specific benefit that occurs to participants of a program.

Indicator: what you are measuring that demonstrates whether a desired change has occurred.

Baseline data: initial information collected before project begins.

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